

Creation is Good
United Church of Broomfield
June 4, 2023

Genesis 1:1-2:4a (CEB)

1 When God began to create the heavens and the earth— 2 the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters— 3 God said, “Let there be light.” And so light appeared. 4 God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

6 God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other.” 7 God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. 8 God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

9 God said, “Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear.” And that’s what happened. 10 God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. 11 God said, “Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth.” And that’s what happened. 12 The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

13 There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

14 God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. 15 They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth.” And that’s what happened. 16 God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. 17 God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

19 There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

20 God said, “Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.” 21 God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. 22 Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

23 There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

24 God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. 25 God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. 26 Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

27 God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. 30 To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. 31 God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

2 The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. 2 On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. 4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Things are. The world is. The universe, whatever that is, is. I am. You are. That didn't just happen. Some people believe that it is all the result of an awesome succession of accidents and coincidences; but I just can't believe that. All of this didn't just happen. Creation must have been the result of some kind of a miracle; something so great that it's beyond comprehension. And if there was this miracle called creation, there must be some miracle worker. Nothing that Darwin or anyone else has discovered can deny that, at least for me. And I don't deny scientific discoveries or evolution by any means, but I can't exclude one from the other. As a matter of fact, for those who are perceptive, the discoveries of modern science really affirm the miracle of creation and lead us to gaze in reverent awe into the wonders of the world around us and to be very aware that some greater reality, one too great to be contained within our little thoughts and doctrines, must have made it all happen.

That is the message of the first chapter of the Bible. God created. It was good. And the creation witnesses to the reality of the creator.

That is a message that we need to hear when we are feeling lost and alone in a world that seems flat and indifferent. Then we may have a deep yearning to get in touch with some greater reality that can give it all meaning. When you see a magnificent sunset. When you look into a baby's eyes. When words escape you.

Our skeptical culture tells us that the only things that are real are things that can be seen or touched. But the very existence of the things we can see and touch points to the existence of some other reality, an invisible reality, that brought all of this into being and keeps it working. That in itself is not all that we need to bring us into a life-fulfilling relationship with God. But it is a starting place. At least it helps us to see, when we are inclined to doubt, that there is something -- or someone -- out there, someone with whom we must have some kind of a relationship.

The apparent conflicts between science and religion continue to torment many people.

Scientific method demands that scientists require empirical evidence, proof based on things you can see and touch, before they can claim scientific proof of any finding. That scientific method has served scientists and society well.

Religious people, on the other hand, learn a lot from experience and from revelation. They are far more comfortable with embracing “not knowing.” Those sources of knowledge have served religious people and society well.

Some scientists and some religionists are so imprisoned within their own ways of thinking that they cannot appreciate the other's way of thinking. They are bound to come into conflict. There are many competent scientists who practice the scientific method in their work and who are spiritual persons in their lives as a whole. They are open to the leading of experience and revelation. Astronaut, research scientist and Christian, Dr. Leslie Wickman, wrote a book called, “God of the Big Bang: How Modern Science Affirms the Creator.” She talks about how complex scientific discoveries and religious faith fit together perfectly and naturally.

Have you seen those YouTube videos that doing extreme “zoom outs” or “zoom ins?” There is one called “Universe Size Comparison,” that begins with looking at a woman lying on a field of grass in a park. Then, we take on the perspective of the camera, which rises higher and higher and higher. You see a park, then the town, then the city at 10km width, the state, the country at 1000km, the oceans and continents, the globe at 10k km. Then you keep going further and further out with the moon passing by, then more planets and stars and more stars. Our solar system is visible at 10bil Km. You continue until eventually you can see the entire Milky Way Galaxy (100k light years in diameter). Then you see other galaxies, in fact dozens of galaxies. It keeps going and going. You are but an infinitesimal speck in a creation that is never ending. We’ve seen these true and accurate images come back from the Hubble Telescope.

Then the camera reverses and zooms back to the woman, then microscopically into her eye, her retina at 1mm, white blood cells at 10 micrometers, a strand of DNA at 10 nanometers, an oxygen atom at 100 picometers, protons and neutrons at 10 femtometers, and finally quarks (elementary particles) at 1 femtometer (25 bil femtometers = 1 in). Within each of us is creation that is but an infinitesimal speck that we once thought ended with atoms but appears to be never ending. We know this to be true and accurate based on research conducted with the Large Hadron Collider at CERN.

It is a fascinating, beautiful and overwhelming tour of the miracle of creation and of the witness that the creation makes.

It is true that a person with too small a concept of God might be forced by the findings of science to stretch their understanding. An astronomer gazing into her telescope might well remember the words of the psalmist,

³When I look up at your skies,
at what your fingers made—
the moon and the stars
that you set firmly in place—

⁴ what are human beings
that you think about them;

what are human beings
that you pay attention to them? (Psalm 8:3-4 ceb)

Then she might think, "that psalmist didn't know the half of it," and her reverence would deepen, not diminish.

The creation bears a witness to the existence of the creator. That can change the way we think about a lot of things. For instance, one who has grown accustomed to living just in terms of what can be seen and touched may find it hard to believe that there is anything more for us after death. But one who sees the tangible world as a witness to the creator is more likely to think, "If God created all of this and gave us life in this world, then God can certainly do whatever God chooses to do with us beyond this life."

The most important thing that we can learn from the witness of the creation is that there is more than just what we can see and touch. There is "someone" who is invisible, who is even more real than the things we can see and touch because that someone gave being to the things we can see and touch. That is a place to start in our relationship with God.

And, it is not a place to stop. It is not enough. If we are going to move into a relationship with God that will meet the deep spiritual needs of our lives, we will need more. We will need to find ourselves in relationship with that great invisible other. We will need to discover that our own interactions with life and ALL of creation in all of its innumerable, diverse forms are, in one way or another, interactions with God. The people whose stories are told in the Hebrew Scriptures learned to experience God through their experiences with the creation.

We need even more. We need some revelation to show us what God is like and how God relates to us and how we ought to respond to God.

This week, several of us finished the spring book study of *The Sunflower* by Simon Wiesenthal, a holocaust survivor's interactions with a dying SS officer and the exploration of what forgiveness is. We read of a Jewish woman in the concentration camp at that time that said, in order to account for the torture, murders and deaths of the Jews, "God was on leave." Is that the truth about God? That God would abandon creation and allow torture and murder? If that is not what God is like, then what should we think of God? We need some revelation to help us know WHO created all things and who meets us in the experiences of our lives.

As Christians, we believe that God responded to that need by intentionally sending Jesus Christ to help us to know God. Jesus has shown us that God is one who loves us and is continually reaching out to us to save us. Jesus has shown us that the right way to live in response to God's love is to trust God's love and to live in a loving relationship with everything in life.

But even that is not enough. Remembering that a revelation was made at some time in the past may not meet our present needs. We need to find our ways into a personal relationship with the living God so that we can experience all of our interactions with creation as interactions with one who loves us. Does God reach out to us in some special way to help us find our way into that personal relationship with God? Our personal relationship is communal and vice versa.

On the church calendar, Today is called Trinity Sunday. That is the Sunday on which we remember that God can be known as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit. That is a puzzling teaching for lots of people. That is because we keep trying to make it more complicated than it needs to be. The doctrine of the Trinity simply means that God keeps reaching out to us to lead us into the kind of relationship with God that we need. God makes God's self known to us as the Creator, one who gives being and lives in constant relationship with us. It is to this aspect of

God's being that the creation makes its witness. Because of the witness of the creation, we can know that we are dealing with a reality. God also makes God's self known to us through the Christ, Jesus, whom God sent to show us that God is one who loves us. Finally, God comes to be with us in a real way every day as the Holy Spirit. God does that so that we can know that the one who created and the one who loves is also one who is with us every moment of every day, living in a relationship with us that can shape our lives if we will let it.

We all need that kind of a complete relationship with God. Most of us are still trying to find our ways into it. Sometimes we feel closer to God and sometimes we feel that we are far away. But if, during those times when we feel far from God, we begin to wonder whether the whole thing is just the product of someone's imagination, then we always have the witness of the created world to fall back on. The creation witnesses to the existence of the creator. Our very being tells us that there must be someone out there -- and that is a place to start.

If we learn to appreciate the wonder and beauty of being, the witness becomes even more profound. As you leave this sanctuary today, pause and take a moment to feel the warmth of the sun, a gentle breeze perhaps. Stop to smell the rain, hear the birds and see the colors of the leaves and flowers. Notice people, families, children moving about and listen to their chatter, their laughter.

Take in all of it. God created it and this is what it means to be alive – it is not to be taken for granted – IT IS GOOD!

Things are. I am. You are. That didn't just happen. Being itself witnesses to its creator. Let us give thanks. AMEN